

Noteworthy Scottish Lepidoptera in 1998

During the course of contracted survey work on the Ministry of Defence's Kirkcudbright Training Area in south-west Scotland, m.v. traps were operated on a monthly basis at a number of locations across the site from May to September 1998. In spite of the constant wet and cold weather that seemed to follow me around during that particular year, a list of 189 species was obtained. Several of these appear to be worthy of placing on record; all were encountered adjacent to ancient broad-leaved woodland next to the sea at Abbey Burn Foot, at OS grid reference NX 7444. I take this opportunity to remind readers of the existence and considerable value of the Scottish Insect Records Index (SIRI) at the National Museums of Scotland in Edinburgh (see Shaw, 1987. *Ent. Rec.* **99**: 37-38). This powerful research tool lists all literature references for Scottish insects, currently to the end of 1995 and should always be consulted when discussing scarce or potentially new Scottish species. My interesting moths were as follows:

Tebenna micalis (Mann) (Choreutidae)

Formerly confused with *T. bjerkandrella*, which is not British, this is normally an extremely rare immigrant from Iberia. Three examples were netted from amongst several dozens flying in early morning sunshine on the south-facing coastline on 21 June 1998; they represent the first records of this species for Scotland.

Tethea ocularis (L.) ssp. *octogesimea* (Hb.) (Thyatiridae) – Figure of Eighty

A single example came to light on 10 July 1998. Interrogation of SIRI indicates that there appear to be only two previous records of this species in Scotland. Mr G.V. Bull recorded larvae (as *Palimpsestis ocularis*), as well as larvae of the easily confused *Tethea or* (D.&S.), at Rannoch (Perthshire) between 21 and 31 July 1936 (*Proc. South London ent. Nat. Hist. Soc.* **1936/37**: 34 & 35). This seems a rather unlikely locality (although *Tethea or* (D.&S.) is locally frequent in that general region). The location of any bred adults from these larvae is not known. More recently, Mark Shaw of the National Museums of Scotland found a larva at Rowardennan during 1989 and an adult moth was apparently reared from this. No doubt Mark's disgust at rearing a nice adult moth rather than one of his favourite parasitoids is the reason why the present whereabouts of the specimen are unknown! Mark has, accordingly, suggested, with apologies, that his record should be regarded as unconfirmed. *T. ocularis* has never been captured in the Rothamsted light trap at Rowardennan (Adrian Riley, *pers. comm.*).

Euphyia biangulata (Haw.) (Geometridae) – Cloaked Carpet

A single, freshly emerged specimen arrived in the light trap on 5 July 1998. I had initially assumed that this was a new species for Scotland, perhaps originating from the resident population in the northern part of the Isle of Man, some 50 kilometres to the south-west. However, after I had rather too hastily exhibited it as such at the Annual Exhibition of the British Entomological and Natural History Society, Keith Bland very kindly pointed out to me that there were two earlier Scottish records referred to in SIRI given (both as *Cidaria picata*) in *Trans.*

Dumfries & Galloway Nat. Hist. Soc. **1862-3**: 61 (for VC 73 – Kirkcudbrightshire) and **1918-9**: 164 (for VC 74 – Wigtownshire). I have not yet been able to locate a copy of the 1918-9 volume to elaborate on the Wigtownshire record, but that for Kirkcudbrightshire reads “Terregles; very rare”. Terregles is just west of Dumfries, OS grid reference NX 9277, about 40 kilometres north-east of Abbey Burn Foot. My 1998 record thus appears to be only the third record of the species for Scotland, the only recent one and, perhaps, the only reliable one.

Chloroclystis chloerata Mabilie (Geometridae) – Sloe Pug

A single male arrived at the light on 20 June 1998. Its identity was confirmed by examination of its genitalia. There are no literature records of this species in SIRI to the end of 1995 and so the moth is assumed to be new for Scotland.

Agrotis puta (Hb.) ssp. *puta* (Hb.) (Noctuidae) – Shuttle-shaped Dart

Two or three examples representing both males and females were attracted to the m.v. light on 20 June 1998 and are evidently the first confirmed records for this species in Scotland. Not realising the significance of this record at the time (the moth reaches the hundreds during a good year in my Hertfordshire garden!) I did not retain any voucher specimens. There appears to be only a single previous Scottish record of this species, the validity of which is open to debate. This relates to a record at Kirkconnel Moss (now Kirkconnel Flow National Nature Reserve), Dumfries-shire given by William Lenonn (*sic*) in *Trans. Dumfries & Galloway Nat. Hist. Soc.* **1862 - 63**: 53-63 (the record is on page 57). This same record is referred to by Herbert Jenner Fust junior in *Trans. ent. Soc. Lond.* **1868**: 437 & 475 as “record doubtful – south-west lowlands subprovince”. The record in Barrett (1896. *Lepidoptera of the British Isles* **3**: 301) also refers to this Kirkconnel record. Kirkconnel is about 34 kilometres north-east of my Abbey Burn Foot site.

Hydraecia petasitis Doubleday (Noctuidae) – Butterbur

A few moths were attracted to m.v. on 15 August 1998, the trap having been deliberately placed in the centre of a very large expanse of the larval foodplant in order to discover if this species was present. The moth is very sparsely recorded in southern Scotland, but in my view this may be rather more a function of under-recording than it is a reflection of reality. Nevertheless, this appears to be a new record for VC73 – Kirkcudbrightshire.

It seems rather surprising that so many interesting moths could be generated from such a short overall list of species, particularly as all the nights selected (from afar) for the survey work were cold and rainy. Clearly there are likely to be more discoveries to be made in this hopelessly under-recorded region and anyone passing through on their way to catch the Irish ferry from Stranraer might do far worse than leave a day early and spend a night with the moth-trap in Kirkcudbrightshire.

I am most grateful indeed to Jim McCleary, Lepidoptera Recorder for the Dumfries and Galloway region, for his invaluable comments on my list of species recorded and in particular for pointing out to me the potential significance of the *Agrotis puta* and *Tethea ocularis* records. Thanks also to Keith Bland for kindly pointing out the error of my ways concerning *Euphyia biangulata* and for supplying me with the literature references for that species in Scotland. Mark Shaw provided considerable assistance in checking the Scottish Insect Records Index for previous records of all the species discussed and for obtaining the appropriate literature references for me. I am also grateful to David Carter at the Natural History Museum, London, for locating one of the required literature references.— COLIN W. PLANT, 14 West Road, Bishops Stortford, Hertfordshire CM23 3QP.

New species of Lepidoptera for the Isle of Wight

On 16 May 1998 Brian Warne caught an example of *Hadena comta* (D.&S.) at his light trap at Binstead. This species at present has extended its range westwards to Gloucestershire and northwards to Lincolnshire and is new to the Isle of Wight. Whether this species originated in this country as a result of migration or importation is a question which remains unresolved. On 26 August of the same year David Biggs found a larva of *Mompha sturnipennella* (Tr.) (= *nodicolella*) (Fuchs.) in a galled seed pod of *Epilobium angustifolium* at Bouldnor; this emerged on 11 September. This species is new to both Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. On 1 September I took an example of the rare migrant *Thaumetopoea processionea* (L.) at Freshwater – new to both Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. A second example was recorded on 6 September.

I am grateful to Barry Goater for the identification by dissection of the following two species which were taken at Freshwater and are both new Vice-County records. *Eupithecia satyrata* (Hb.) was recorded on 5 June 1968 and two *Oligia versicolor* (Borkh.) were taken, one each on 1 and 6 June 1997. I have two specimens which are probably this species dated 14 and 15 June 1962 in my collection, both taken at Freshwater.— S.A. KNILL-JONES, 2 School Green Road, Freshwater, Isle of Wight PO40 9AL.

Who needs a trap when a hamster will do – or – Pyralids ate my pasta

Do you ever wonder how uncommon moths are trapped, without resorting to spending hundreds of pounds on a Robinson or Skinner trap. At last the secret can be revealed. Simply get your children a hamster and then buy its food loose from your friendly pet supermarket. Place in a warm cupboard and then wait for your children to ask you what those strange little moths are which appear to have infested their bedroom. By this time, because you won't have fought your way across their bedroom floor for some time, the "little moths" will have made home in other parts of the house. The kitchen would seem to be a good place – it's warm and there's a good supply of food. How about that flat pasta you bought the last time you were in France, or the brown rice in the same cupboard? This infestation by the Indian Meal Moth *Plodia interpunctella* (Hb.) lasted from midsummer 1997 to midsummer 1998 – in spite of throwing away all the stored pasta, rice and hamster food. The rest of